

Frank L. and Ella Williams House
1515 2nd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5831

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
89-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FRANK L. AND ELLA WILLIAMS HOUSE

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Location: 1515 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1915 or 1916

Description: The Williams House is one of six matching gambrel-front houses placed along the east side of 2nd Avenue. With its minimal ornament and substantial proportions, it represents one of the last significant house types to appear in the survey area. In keeping with the history of infill patterns, frame gambrel-front houses of this type appear mostly on 1st and 2nd avenues, at the outer bounds of the area.

This asphalt-sided dwelling is two rather than two-and-a-half stories tall. Visual ornament comes mostly from formal features: the slight cornice return at the base of the gable, the irregular piercing pattern of the three windows in the second-floor front facade, and the picture window and sidelights at the front door below. The window surrounds are rather wide and flat with a cap of stepped molding above a row of beaded trim. The contrast of light paint against dark siding has been used to highlight exterior woodwork and the porch foundation. A brick chimney rises from the center back of the roof ridge.

All six houses in this row have been altered, this one least substantially on the exterior. The asphalt siding is a later addition, as are the metal porch supports and possibly the porch foundation as well. A two-tone porch awning changes visual proportion and de-emphasizes the picture window and front entrance. The small window in the attic has, however, been retained.

History: The six matching houses on 2nd Avenue (Nos. 1513-1523) are one of two larger groups of contractor-developed houses found in the survey area. They were built by the contracting firm Hoyer & Kring. Collectively, they make up one of the newest areas of housing within the Fourth Ward survey--much of the land facing 2nd Avenue in this block was owned by John Wright's heirs as late as 1912, when it was sold in November of that year to S. M. Hoyer and M. L. Kring.

In the property tax records of 1913, Hoyer & Kring are assessed for "about 2 acres Vacant hills & stone 1515 to 35 2 ave." for \$2,000, with the note "from John Wright est." The 1912 assessments reveal that except for two other vacant half-lots, this is the last remaining section of the original Wright estate. As listed in the Altoona directory for 1912-13, Samuel M. Hoyer and Mal L. Kring had offices at 1624 8th Ave., just outside the Fourth Ward boundaries. They listed themselves as "contractors, stone and cement." Hoyer was also the president and Kring the director of the Cambria Clay Manufacturing Company, located in Wilmore, Pa., with an office at this same 8th Avenue address.

In a 1915 deed, M. L. and Hortense Kring sold this single half-lot, 25' x 120', to Frank L. Williams for \$2,700. Directories show him living here by 1917.

A 1931 sheriff's sale transferred the property to the Workingman's Building and Loan Association which rented it to Matthew Riley. Carmel M. and Joseph Daversa purchased the property in August 1944 for \$2,800, and they took up residence soon after. Joseph worked as a welder for the PRR.

Sources: Maps: 1909, 1932. Deed books: 121/616-619, 221/512, 229/452, 405/187, 490/139. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also

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additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.